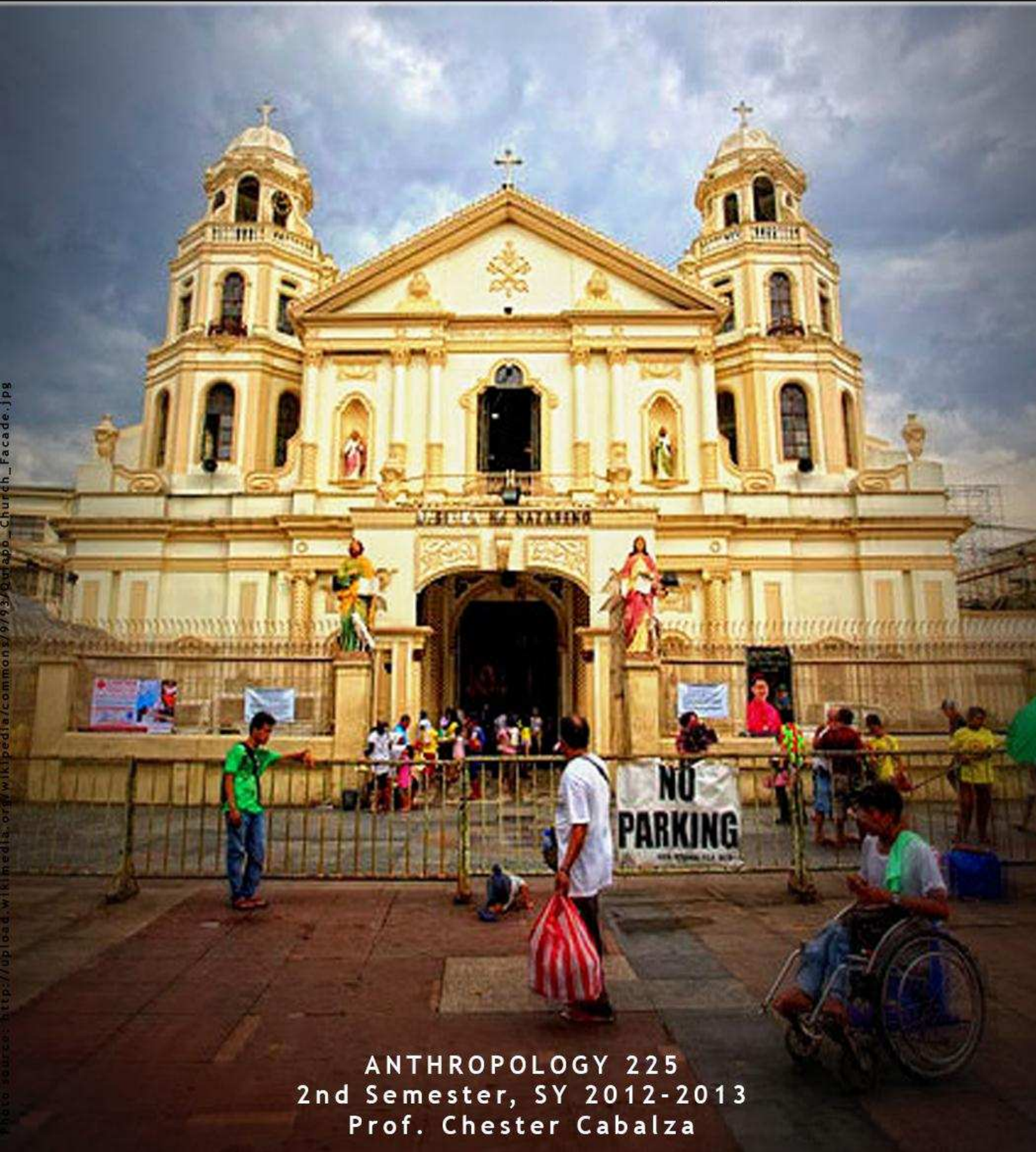


ORGANIZED CHAOS

A Cultural Analysis of Quiapo



ANTHROPOLOGY 225
2nd Semester, SY 2012-2013
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**ORGANIZED CHAOS:
A CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF QUIAPO**

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
Anthropology 225
Second Semester SY 2012-2013
under Prof. Chester Cabalza

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our class wishes to thank Prof. Chester Cabalza for allowing us to submit a group research paper, which also serves as the accompaniment to our class documentary on Quiapo.

We also wish to thank the people of Quiapo, especially those who participated in our documentary and interviews, for giving us ample material for our study.

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INTRODUCTION

Situated in Manila, Quiapo is well-known in the Philippines as a center for religious and economic activities. The place is often featured in Philippine films and literature as Filipinos throughout the country are able to identify with Quiapo based on their own perspectives and experiences. Diversity serves as an apt theme for discussing Quiapo as it is described by a number of contrasting accounts. It is a religious site, but it has gained notoriety as it also serves as a hub for criminal activities. It is seen as a thriving market place by vendors, yet it also represents one of the main symbols of urban poverty. In sum, it is probably this diverse nature that enables Filipinos, regardless of the existing parochial ethnic divisions in the country, to identify with Quiapo as a heritage site. Given this diversity, Quiapo cuts across regional and local identities so that Filipinos, including those outside Manila, do not view the place along divisive ethnic lines. This diversity can also be viewed as an asset of the city during a time when districts are becoming increasingly homogenized with the proliferation of commercial centers, which have become a key indicator of successful economic governance. Without distinct landmarks that reflect the local history or established everyday religious or economic practices of the local population, a district becomes nothing more than a place of transient residence or a source of income, devoid of a sense of identity and belongingness from its citizens. It is then the unique characteristics of Quiapo and the dynamics of everyday activities that are not found elsewhere in the country that provides the place with a certain allure that attracts visitors not just from the Philippines but from outside the country as well.

However, while Quiapo is known to many, the body of literature on Quiapo remains scarce, and cultural accounts of the place are not documented as a whole. Along this line, this paper aims to provide a general overview of the cultural facets of Quiapo by reviewing existing literature and using primary data gathered from first hand experiences during field work. While a comprehensive study of Quiapo is beyond the scope of this paper, it aims to contribute to the existing literature of cultural accounts of Quiapo by compiling individual articles that are focused on a specific subject. The main aspects chosen for this study include Christianity and religious practices in Quiapo; the Muslim community; mystics and occult practices; food culture; poverty; market and commerce; criminality; and politics.

I. BRIEF HISTORY OF QUIAPO

BY FAYSALEYAH P. ABDULLAH

BEFORE DISCUSSING CERTAIN CULTURAL ASPECTS OF QUIAPO, a brief historical background of the place is in order. Quiapo derives its name from the plant kiyapo (*Pistia Stratiotes*). Before the Spaniards came in the Philippines, Quiapo had been a farming place, surrounded by water canals because of its location near the Pasig River. After the rainy seasons, the water would not fully subside in the area, which allowed the kiyapo plants to thrive all year. Based on the riddle, “Sampalok na hindi mahinog-hinog, kiyapong hindi lumubog-lubog,” the place became known as Kiyapo because kiyapo plants could be harvested at any time of the year.

Before the arrival of the Spaniards, Quiapo was part of the territory of Rajah Soliman, the datu of Manila. A battle ensued between the datu and the Spaniards after Rajah Soliman refused the wish of the Spanish side, led by Martin de Goiti and Juan Salcedo to recognize the Spanish flag (Rico 1999, 7). The camp of Rajah Soliman lost and Miguel Lopez de Legazpi went on to establish Manila as the center of Spanish power in the Philippines in 1571. Back then, Quiapo had only been one of the *encomiendas* of the Spanish King. By then, the name Kiyapo was changed to Quiapo because the Spanish alphabet did not have the letter “K” (ibid, 10).

Manila was then divided into two parts. The Intramuros was the part of the city, where the administrative offices, education establishments, and the community of Spaniards could be found. On the other hand, the Extramuros was where the districts that were tasked to serve those who were living in the Intramuros. One of these districts was Santa Ana de Sapa, where Quiapo was located (ibid, 8). On 29 August 1586, as a response to the petition of San Pedro Bautista, Governor General Santiago de Vera issued a directive, declaring Quiapo as an independent district. It became one of the main centers for propagating Roman Catholicism in the country.

In 1603, a rebellion instigated by the Chinese community under the leadership of Juan Suintay resulted in the destruction of many of Quiapo’s infrastructures. This rebellion stemmed from the oppression and marginalization of the Chinese during the

Spanish period. It may be recalled that the Chinese were confined to live in the Parian and that as sangleyes, they were only second to the lowest class, with the lowest class being the tulisans or those who were not Christianized, such as the Muslims in the South and the lumads. While the Chinese were initially able to overwhelm the Spanish side, they were eventually forced back to the Southern Tagalog areas when the Spanish mobilized more forces against them (ibid, 12-13).

During the 19th century, Quiapo was known as a prosperous city as tall buildings, the Quiapo Church, and traders were found in the area. It was also was home to many notable edifices, namely the Fabrica de Cerveza de San Miguel, the Spanish Royal Navy Club, and the El Renacimiento of the Katipunan movement (ibid, 17-18). Unfortunately, many of the structures were destroyed during the Philippine Revolution in 1898.

Quiapo remained as a district in 1901 when the Americans came to the Philippines. It became even more prosperous with several education institutions and commercial establishments. Public works were the main concern of the American colonial government as it sought to make Manila the “business hub of the orient” (Andrade 2006, 54). In addition, Quiapo became a center of news publishing during the first two decades of American rule and became home to several colleges and universities, Far Eastern University and the College of Fine Arts of the University of the Philippines, which remained in Quiapo until 1928 even though the main building of the University was in Padre Faura Street (ibid).

Quiapo had also been a place where Filipinos first gained access to cinema, which had become a main source of entertainment in the Philippines since 1901 since its debut in 1897 (ibid). The first theatre house in Quiapo was built in the corner of the Azcarraga and Sta. Rosa streets. By 1932, Quiapo had two air-conditioned theaters: the Times Theater, which showed American films; and the Life Theater, which showed Tagalog movies (ibid, 58). It was also during this period when commercial radio broadcasts were introduced. The first commercial radio station then was the KZRH, which was owned by the Pacific Commercial Company, the largest American trading firm in the Orient (ibid).

When the Great Depression occurred in 1929 in the United States of America, the Philippine economy also experienced a downturn. Due to economic hardships and unemployment, the 1920s and 1930s became known as a period when communism and subversive movements flourished in the Philippines with many of the Left's organizational headquarters found in Quiapo (ibid).

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, then the President of the US, made use of Keynesian economic policies and used various measures to stimulate the economy. One of its implications was to pull out the Philippines from the effects of the Great Depression and to a period of economic prosperity with commercial centers, movie houses, among others being built.

During the 1930s, it turned out that Quiapo had been an espionage center of the Japanese (ibid, 60). Home to a large Japanese population, many Japanese people operated business establishments in Quiapo. The most noteworthy one would be Major General Masami Maeda, the chief of staff of Lt. Gen. Masaharo Homma in the Bataan campaign (Andrade 2006, 60). This chapter in Quiapo history would reflect a calculated plan on the part of the Japanese to take over the Philippines even before World War II in 1942. During the war, Quiapo was heavily demolished because of bombings from the American side against the Japanese troops. The Quezon Bridge had been destroyed and many buildings were razed to the ground.

Many of these infrastructures were rebuilt and rehabilitated afterwards. Once again, Quiapo became a commercial district because of the Quiapo Church through which Quezon Boulevard passed leading to the new Quezon City (ibid, 64). It became the center of turo-turo restaurants, clothing and shoes, and kitchenware. Vocational schools and colleges were established and Quiapo formed a major section of the University belt.

The history of Quiapo during the Martial law period until contemporary times will be covered in the subsequent chapters. This section merely provided a short background to demonstrate that Quiapo had played a major role throughout the country's history, which reflects the evolution of Filipino culture with the establishment of new structures and the influence of foreign actors. By situating

Quiapo in Philippine history, one may be able to deduce that the place remains as an important heritage site for Filipinos because it has been part of the country's evolution as a nation right from the start.

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II. THE QUIAPO CHURCH AND CATHOLICISM

BY DANNA PAULA S. OLAYA

THE MAJORITY OF THE FILIPINO POPULATION is comprised of Christians, who are mostly Roman Catholics. The Catholic Church is regarded by many as a key socializing agent as well as a main source of political influence in the Philippines. Recently, the news have been filled with reports about contentious issues involving the Catholic church and politicians, which suggest that the daily life of a Filipino is highly influenced by the church despite a constitutional provision that mandates the separation between the church and the state. Given that religion forms an important aspect of Filipinos' lives and serves as a key factor in decision making and their lifestyles, this section will revisit one of the most popular landmarks in Quiapo that is well known to a large group of Christian devotees, namely the Quiapo Church, which serves as one of the main edifices of the Catholic legacy left by the Spaniards in the Philippines.

The Quiapo Church is located at Plaza Miranda along Quezon Boulevard, Manila. It is one of the most famous churches in Manila. The formal name for the church is Parish of Saint John the Baptist. The church is also known as "Church of the Black Nazarene" or sometimes referred as the "Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene". The church is the home of the "Black Nazarene" which was carved in Mexico and brought to the country through the Spanish galleon. The church was said to be found by Franciscan Missionaries in 1586 and was originally just made of bamboo and nipa. The church has suffered two natural calamities which include a fire in 1639 and an earthquake in 1863. In 1928, there was another fire that damaged the building. It was rebuilt then by architect Juan Nakpil and there was also an expansion made in the 1980s.

The Quiapo Church is well known for housing a life-size image called the Black Nazarene. Filipinos are known as great devotees of it and the church was made as the center of pilgrimage of Filipinos from all over the country. Many had recounted tales about the miraculous healings and answered prayers by the Black

Nazarene, which accounts for many of its devotees. Every day, there are hourly masses and confessions, but it is Friday that is considered as Quiapo day when devotees would flock to Quiapo. The main event for the Quiapo Church is January 9, which is the feast of the Black Nazarene. This feast is well known all over the whole world where a multitude of bare footed devotees join the procession of the image. For this year alone, it was recorded that 9 millions devotees filled the streets surrounding Quiapo, clad in their maroon and yellow shirts as well as their white towels and handkerchiefs with the intention of being able to wipe them against the miraculous image.

The dark image of the Black Nazarene, which is a wooden sculpture of Jesus Christ, was said to be carved by a Mexican-Indian artist from Acapulco, Mexico, who was on board in one of the ships involved in the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade, although there is no existing record that can tell the exact date when the image of the Black Nazarene arrived in the country.

The color of the Black Nazarene created many speculations among the people. The most popular story is the one wherein a fire broke in the ship when the Black Nazarene was transported to Manila. The image caught fire and this caused its dark color. Dr. Fernando Nakpil Zialcita of Ateneo de Manila University's Department of Sociology and Anthropology refuted these kind of stories, saying that the image has been black ever since. He said "So many images in Catholic and Christianity are black. In Europe, the virgins were black, like the patroness of Poland." In our country alone there are other black images like the Sto. Nino in Tanggapan and Santo Cristo de Longos in Tondo. The black shade was said to be common among images in an agrarian society for that color was often associated with the fertility of the soil. Zialcita (2006) also says that the Filipinos are able to identify with the image of the Black Nazarene because of its dark color. Many of the devotees of the Black Nazarene are from the low economic classes, who are usually asking for special graces from the image.

The Black Nazarene is also known for its miraculous deeds like surviving the great fires, earthquakes and even the bombing of Manila during World War II.

Nowadays, the original head and cross of the image are located in the Altar Mayor of the Quiapo Church, while the original one is used during processions.

The devotion to the Black Nazarene is highly noted especially, during the feast of the image. On January 9, during the homily of Bishop Broderick Pabillo at Quiapo Church, he said that the devotees of the image were never forced in professing their strong devotion for it. In the article “Devotion to the Black Nazarene: Pastoral Understanding”, Msgr. Jose Clemente Ignacio said that the tradition liberates the heart of the devotees. He stated that the ‘secret force’ of the pilgrimage is the progress it brings to the heart and the intensification of one’s faith and religion. For the devotees, touching or kissing the image does not mean idolatry, but a symbol of “concreteness,” as this is a notable trait of religious Filipinos. Ignacio said that “Filipinos are a people of ‘the concrete.’ Our expressions are expressed in the concrete. It is a Filipino trait to wipe, touch, kiss, or embrace sacred objects. We Filipinos believe in the presence of the Divine in sacred objects and places. This is a way of expressing one’s faith. It is an expression of their devotion.” Even Nick Joaquin (1988) defended the so-called ‘panata’ of the devotees and linked the ‘panata’ to the idea of extravagance. He said that worship is extravagant for even the stories of worship in the Bible show extravagance like how King David danced naked before the Ark and the precious perfume poured in Jesus’ feet.

As a religion, Catholicism is seen by its believers as a provider of equality among people, given its teaching that everyone is equal and the only higher than another is God. However, interviews that were conducted in Quiapo suggest that the Quiapo Church may be creating a bigger gap between the poor and the rich. One vendor of sampaguita on a wheelchair said that Quiapo is a place of poor people but rich people are the ones who frequent the Quiapo church. Rich people inside the church are seen sitting comfortably in their pews, while the poor people would be left outside under the glaring heat of the sun. This dichotomy seems to make the poor more inclined to undertake economic activities rather than participate in religious rituals in Quiapo. Some have even been observed to be selling paraphernalia that contradict the teachings of the church. This has led critics and religious skeptics to decry religious hypocrisy among Catholics as some engage in “unChristian” activities, such as

adultery, extravagance, abortion, among others even while regularly performing religious activities, such as visiting the Quiapo Church.

However, what remains indisputable is the fact that the Quiapo Church continues to attract devotees and church goers, despite the fact that some adjacent churches may be cleaner, safer, and less crowded. This is mainly due to the prevalent belief that the Quiapo Church has a healing effect (Bonilla 2006, 112). Physical suffering and discomfort may also be interpreted as a commitment to reciprocate through the panata. This gives devotees a sense of assurance that their discomfort would not be in vain.

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III. THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN QUIAPO

BY KEITH DETROS

WITH QUIAPO GEOGRAPHICALLY LOCATED AT THE HEART OF MANILA, it would only seem appropriate that even religion converges there. Aside from Catholicism, as evidenced by the Quiapo Church and the annual Feast of the Black Nazarene as attended by millions of devotees, Quiapo is also home to one of the largest Muslim communities in Metro Manila. Among the other Muslim settlements in the capital city, such as Tandang Sora, Baclaran, and Taguig, the most centrally located and advanced in terms of commercial capacity is Quiapo (Yahya 2009).

A. One Single Community: Of Business and Religion

It can be argued that the Muslim population of Quiapo district in Manila is not defined by the basic political and geographic boundaries as provided by law, nor by the number of people residing in the area. There are Muslim communities around Quiapo that conduct commercial and business affairs in the district and form a vital part of the Muslim community.

Quiapo has its own Muslim population comprised of Maranaos, Maguindanaons, Iranun, and Tausug, that engages in barter trade, buy-and-sell of used clothes, pirated CD/DVDs, shop tenants, restaurants, hotels, travel agencies, and street merchandise (Watanabe 2008). But technically speaking, there is a separate designated Islamic Center located in the adjacent district: San Miguel. San Miguel borders Quiapo to the east and to the south. The Islamic Center is a community of Muslims and composed of Maranaos, Tausugs, Maguindanaons, and Yakans. San Miguel, as an Islamic Center, was established in 1964 to accommodate the exodus of Muslims from Southern Mindanao due to the continued conflict between the government and the secessionist movements – the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and later, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) (Watanabe 2008). Though on separate districts, the residents of San Miguel actually spend considerable time in Quiapo as it is there that they conduct their business to take advantage of the

commercial culture of the place (Yahya 2009). Thus, due to the constant interaction of the Muslim settlements of Quiapo and San Miguel, it can be argued that they can be considered as a single Muslim community.

Yet, the channel that unites the Quiapo and San Miguel communities into one is not only confined to the business aspect of Quiapo. It helps that Quiapo is home to one of the grandest mosque in the country – the Golden Mosque. A study by Watanabe in 2008 details a close mutual relationship, which can be established between religious facilities and the development of local communities among ethnic groups and religion. In this case, the mosque serves as a symbol and a visible landmark for the Muslim community. Usually, where there is large number of Muslim residents, they decide to build a mosque. Conversely, when a mosque is built, a development of a Muslim community around it can be expected. The latter could be the case of Quiapo.

The Golden Mosque, also known as the Masjid Al-Dahab, was part of the roster of infrastructures built during the Marcos Administration due to Imelda Marcos' so-called "edifice complex." Just as the Coconut Palace was built in 1978 for Pope John Paul's visit in 1981, the Golden Mosque was built in 1976 to honor of the visit of Libya's president Muammar al-Gaddafi. However, just as Pope John Paul II did not reside in the Coconut Palace, the Golden Mosque also did not fulfill its initial purpose as Gaddafi's visit to the Philippines was cancelled later on. Eventually, the mosque became one of the centers of Islamic culture in Manila. It is both this religious and commercial connection that keeps the Muslim community in Quiapo and San Miguel vibrant to this day.

B. Tracing to the Roots: Idealism in Quiapo

It should be noted that the presence of Muslims in the area is not only due to the influx of Muslims from Southern Mindanao after the World War II, nor the presence of the Golden Mosque. In reality, Manila is a wealthy kingdom before the Spanish colonization in the 15th century effectively ruled by Muslims (Aguilar, 1986; Rolda, 2010). In 1521, explorer Antonio Pigafetta referred to Manila as the 'Muslim

kingdom of Luzon' (Majul as cited by Aguilar, 1986). Some of the famous datus to lead Manila were Rajah Solaiman and Rajah Lakandula. The early Muslims were actively engaged in commerce and trade and were virtually head of the archipelago as they have been representing the country in diplomatic relations with China in 1417 (De Leon, 2008 as cited by Rolda, 2010). It was only in 1571, five years after Miguel Lopez de Legaspi arrived in the country, which the Spanish conquest of Manila occurred.

The knowledge of this history still creates doubt for Muslims whether they are really part of the Filipino nation. In an interview with the cultural head of the Golden Mosque, Mr. Abdul Maksodo Dalupong, he contends that the Muslims have never been subjected to the control of the Philippines. Part of his frustration also include that there was never any recognition of the bravery and the efforts of the Muslims to defend the territory. Mr. Dalupong also stands by the condition that all of us are Muslims in the first place, and advocated that people who converted are Balik Islam members.

Rolda (2010) also states that this frustration emanates from the feeling of Muslims that they have not been given a chance or a considerable part to play in the mainstream social dynamics of the Filipino nation. Though Yayha (2009) argues that the idealism is just rhetoric, it is still alarming that even in the modern setting of Quiapo – one where the environment has already integrated them into the mainstream economic and social life – the uncertainty and the confusion of Muslims regarding their Filipino identity is still evident.

C. Potential Market: Halal Food

As earlier discussed, the Muslim community in the Quiapo is generally known for their business in selling pirated DVDs and tiangge culture (e.g. selling clothes and assorted materials). However, there is one part of the business community that could gain interest not only of the domestic tourists but of international tourists as well.

Around the Golden Mosque, along the streets of Bautista and Globo de Oro, is a series of small restaurants that serve halal food. Halal in Arabic means allowed,

lawful, legal, or permissible under the Shariah (Islamic Law). In Quiapo, halal food refers to the native dishes of Southern Mindanao that Muslims may eat under the Islamic dietary laws.

For a domestic tourist, the halal restaurants provide a new experience and deviates from the formal setting of restaurants that one usually encounters. The dishes are already served per plate and the customers do not need to ask permission from the vendors in getting the food they wish. The table is also full of rice but only pays what one has actually consumed. At the end of the meal, the vendors will just count the plates that have been used. More than the experience, there is more to halal food, which can provide an additional source of income for the Muslim community.

According to the government's marketing promotions arm, the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM), halal food have the potential to be a global business platform for US\$632-billion halal food market (Manila Bulletin, 2013). The consumer market is believed to be around 1.8 billion Muslims around the world or 20% of the world's entire food consumption. Since it is forbidden also by the Shariah Law to use dirty equipment during preparation, processing, and manufacturing of the food, CITEM highlights that not only halal food are healthy but also hygienic. If this sector be properly utilized, this opportunity could be used as a tool to enhance the economic status of our Muslim brothers and sisters that have long been marginalized despite the rich natural resources in Southern Mindanao.

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IV. QUIAPO ON THE FRINGE: FOLK MEDICINE AND OCCULT PRACTICES

BY KATHLEEN POSADAS

ON THE FRINGES OF THE QUIAPO CHURCH AND PLAZA MIRANDA, one could find items and practices that can be described as literally fringe—that is, not belonging to the mainstream. Sitting side-by-side in many vendor stalls are religious paraphernalia of the Catholic faith, various herbal folk medicines, and items of the occult. This curious juxtaposition of beliefs has been observed countless times in writings about Quiapo. But much more noteworthy, perhaps, is the way people in Quiapo take this set-up for granted, especially in a country where the Catholic Church exercises such great influence. Or maybe not “take for granted,” considering that there have been numerous attempts to crack down on the sale of abortifacients (i.e. abortive drugs or potions), but rather that these alternative, sometimes occult practices continue to flourish alongside mass displays of Catholic faith and devotion.

A. Folk medicine

Numerous types of folk medicine, usually made from herbs or other natural sources, are sold in Quiapo’s informal markets. While Quiapo is (in)famous for its abortive herbal concoctions (“pamparegla”) and love potions (“gayuma”), herbal remedies are also available for curing more common physical ailments, such as coughs, colds, headaches, or fevers, including the pito-pito (Romero, 2013). As in the case of the many people trying to make a living in Quiapo, many vendors also inherited their business or capabilities from relatives (usually their mothers), with many having worked at their jobs for more than 20 years (Romero 2013). Herbal vendors earn something between USD 10 to 17 a day (ibid). They also know which parts of the Philippines their plants and herbs were cultivated and swear by the safety of their products (ibid). What is interesting about these herbal medicine vendors is that they require their customers to strengthen their belief in the effectiveness of the potions (“You need to have more faith”), especially if a customer complains that said

potion did not work (ibid). In short, they believe in the infallibility of their wares and that only the user's lack of faith would cause these remedies not to work.

With regard to the pampareglas, some abortive potions found in Quiapo include a herbal remedy that is “an infusion of banana and [kalachuchi] leaves” and “[aqueous] and alcoholic infusions of barks rich in turpinols” (Potts et al, 1977). A scene from Quiapo back in the 1970s was described as thus:

“There are 40-50 stalls clinging to the walls of Quiapo. The whole is a vivid demonstration that neither the congregation nor priests perceive the intent to terminate a very early pregnancy as a sin. Indeed, the Quiapo on Sunday morning may well represent the busiest family planning clinic in the Philippines – it is illegal, may be ineffective and is contrary to the teachings of the formal religion, but culturally it is more acceptable than the programmes for family planning erected on the basis of millions of dollars of foreign aid and national investment.” (ibid).

These days, modern forms of abortifacients such as abortive pills like Cytotec, are also available in Quiapo. But since the recent crackdown on these items, vendors sell these clandestinely. Cate de Leon, a Muscology major from the University of the Philippines, visited Quiapo to canvas for prices of abortifacients and blogged about her experience (2010):

“I asked her if I could see them. She firmly declined. “Bawal kasi magtinda nun dito.” She said she'd only let me *see the products once I closed a deal.[...]*

“I asked several other vendors in the vicinity. You'd never know that they sold pamparegla until you asked. All they displayed were their rosaries. When I had asked around three vendors, one of them started getting suspicious. She asked me straight out if I was buying. I said no. For now I was just asking around. She then turned to her friend and told her to stop talking to me. They were very paranoid about getting caught. Had I brought a camera, I'm not sure they would have let me take any pictures.

“Another vendor tried bargaining with me. ‘Ano po bang budget niyo?’ She probably observed that I wasn't buying anything at 150 pesos. “Baka po nag-iinterview kayo ah!” she asked nicely with a hint of suspicion. I smiled and repeated the same lame excuse that I was asking around for a friend. I asked her if it was safe. She readily told me yes. They were herbal, she said.

“Before I left her, she gave me a slip of paper with her cellphone numbers and instructions on how to take the pamparegla:

*“9pm: Mamayang gabi, hindi maghahapunan
2 pcs cytotec - inumin + 2 Hilab (Guanine) inom
Kapag matutulog na, hindi na tatayo
2 pcs. cytotec - ipasuk sa puwerta
6am: Bukas ng umaga paggising
2 pcs cytotec - inumin uli + 2 Hilab inom
After: one hour puwede ng kumain
Bawal: maligo, maasim, malamig, softdrinks.”*

Despite the crackdown on these contrabands, trade in abortifacients continues to thrive in Quiapo.

B. Occult practices

Rows of tables on the edges of Plaza Miranda are occupied by manghuhulas or fortune tellers. These are people who engage in palm reading; tarot reading, which uses tarot cards; cartomancy, which uses a deck of playing cards; and astrology.

There are three ways these people arrive at their current profession or receive their ability: first, they claim that it is a gift from God; second, they have thoroughly studied their art; and lastly, they inherited their abilities from other people (usually relatives) (Evangelista 1992). Common reasons given for practicing their choice of profession include not wanting to waste abilities they have inherited, wanting to help other people, and using this as a way to pass the time and amuse themselves (ibid).

During a visit to Quiapo, this author decided to avail of the services of one of the tarot readers. What transpired can be read as follows:

“Being someone who goes to tarot readers myself (though not in Quiapo), like other people in Quiapo, I go to them whenever I need advice about my problems. Since I personally believe that forewarned is forearmed, I use the knowledge I receive from tarot readers to plan my actions. The lady who read my fortune in Quiapo described me to a T (“mapagbigay pero mataray”) and gave me advice about love, health, and personal safety. Because of her forecast, I took extra caution when travelling at night and am being more careful with my health these days.

“The lady who told my fortune has been working in Quiapo *for over 40 years. She took over her aunt’s business, but she* did not mention whether she intends on passing it on to another relative. When asked if she was one of the best readers in the area, she responded that there were a number of really good readers as well.

“It was difficult for me to understand her at times not just because of all the noise in our surroundings but because she spoke fast. It was as if she was just going through the motions, which perhaps she was, having done it so many *times over the course of 40 years. The length of one’s* session with the manghuhula depended on the amount paid or service availed of. Since she only did a quick tarot reading for me (where I only got to cut the deck into three, pick three cards and ask three questions) as well as a quick palm reading, everything happened in around 15 to 20 minutes. While many of them openly advertise their services, their set-up is still very informal. There does not seem to be a formal association for their type of business, and many of them do not seem to have legal papers allowing them to conduct business in the area.

According to Evangelista (1992):

“Sa madaling salita, ilegal ang ginagawa nila kaya naman gusto nilang makarami ng kostumer hanggang hindi pa sila hinuhuli ng mga pulis. Isa na [ito] sa mga dahilan kung bakit maiigsi ang kanilang hula at ang kadalasan na dala-dala lamang nila ay baraha, bangko at maliliit na tablang nagsisilbing pamatong ng kanilang baraha, nang sa gayon ay madali silang makatakbo at makapagtago sa mga pulis.”

C. Addressing the human's inner needs

From an economic perspective, one could argue that these alternative items or services are being supplied simply because there is demand for them. Cate de Leon, after seeing the merchandise of a man selling sex toys and sexual enhancement pills for men, said to her aunt: “Wow, kumpleto pala sila dito sa Quiapo. And right outside the church too. Such an odd country we live in.”

Reading her blog entry, one might argue that Quiapo is like one big sari-sari (sundries) store because of its all-you-need-in-one-place set-up, which is preferred by Filipinos. In this regard, it is a place where the problematic, desperate, lost, and weary congregate and where there are businesses ready to serve their needs and provide solutions to their problems, whether physical, sexual or reproductive, emotional, or spiritual. These vendors and manghuhulas consider themselves people who merely wish to help, not just salespeople. Cate de Leon, in her blog, recounts:

“I asked her if she found it weird that she was selling abortion pills right outside the church. She answered that all she presented was sales talk and not the products, which the customer would only get to see once she bought them. She also said that people like her provided help to people like me.”

The manghuhulas whom Evangelista (1992) interviewed also mentioned satisfaction in having helped other people in their time of need. For one female palm reader/numerologist, “ang panghuhula ay nakapagdudulot ng pagpapagaan ng

kalooban dahil nakakatulong siya sa mga problema or suliranin ng mga tao,” and for a male palm reader/cartomancer, “malaki ang naidulot nitong kahalagahan sa kanya. Ito ay dahil sa nakakagawa siya ng kabutihan sa ibang tao.”

Whether one considers them magnanimous; a bunch of frauds, who prey on the vulnerability of those with problems; or even clever entrepreneurs, who are merely seizing on an opportunity to make a living; at the end of the day, they provide something that many people are in need of: alternatibong lunas para sa pangangailangang pangkalooban (alternative solutions for their inner needs). These inner needs can be both literal (e.g. to abort a fetus inside or commonplace illnesses) and figurative (e.g. to find answers to problems bothering them). Gayuma for love, herbs and potions for health, candles to petition for various needs – all these items involve the practice of a ritual. And these rituals and symbols are not only the physical representations of the inner needs in question but also provide the human’s tangible connection to the spiritual realm. People, who go to Quiapo, buy these religious and superstitious paraphernalia so they can use something tangible to give them internal kapayapaan, kapanatagan, kaalaman, and kalusugan.

So for those, who find that saying a novena or touching the Black Nazarene is not enough to soothe their worries, will always have the option of folk remedies, superstitious articles, and occult services to satisfy their needs.

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V. QUIAPO'S FOOD CULTURE

BY ANALYN GRACE GERMO

JEAN ANTHELME BRILLAT-SAVARIN, the famous French politician in the 19th century wrote “Tell me what you eat, and I’ll tell you who you are,” in one of his published writings in 1825. Food is fundamental to the cultural being of a certain place. The manner of preparation and consumption differs from one place to another, thus, certain delicacies become unique to one place.

Quiapo may be one of the richest places in Manila as it has numerous things to offer when it comes to culture, history, and heritage. The place is known for the Nazareno procession showing the immense testament of faith of Catholic devotees to the black Nazarene. Aside from that, Quiapo, being the premier city square of Manila, is considered to be the heart of the city and ultimately presents a distinct food culture.

Three major factors come into play when considering Quiapo as a food hot spot. First is variety. In every corner of Quiapo, street food is available and there is an abundance of restaurants to choose from. Most of the eateries have a “turo-turo” style where one can just walk straight to the stall and choose based on what looks or smells good. From the typical carinderias to halal food, some streets surrounding the golden mosque even offer exotic dishes to adventurers, who are not familiar with the cuisine of Southern Mindanao. A delicious and satisfying meal has always been the goal but it is through an introduction of another cultural group’s food tradition that sparks curiosity. Certain food influences also has reached Quiapo as some shawarma, kebab stands, Japanese pancakes, etc., are noticeable in front of the Quiapo church.

Second is history. The best place to eat in Quiapo is Ma Mon Luk when you are searching for an authentic taste, which has remained the same after almost a century. The restaurant is known for mami (Chinese noodle soup) and siopao (steamed buns) and considered to be the best tasting in Manila as the recipes have been the same since it first started. The legacy of the taste of their signature dishes is what the customers are looking for. Ma Mon Luk does not boast of its interiors or facilities. In

fact, the restaurant looks old and dilapidated. The interior walls are decorated by framed articles of the history of the restaurant and several news clippings wherein the restaurant was mentioned. Ma Mon Luk is the name of the founder of the restaurant, who moved from China to the Philippines in the early 1900s. He became popular with the Manileños because of his chicken noodle soup, which he sells for a living. He opened his first restaurant in Binondo, which is populated by ethnic Chinese. Even though there have been several restaurants that attempted to compete with Ma Mon Luk, they still stuck with the same facility and interior as they wanted to give the authentic ambience to their customers similar to the time when they first started.

Third is accessibility. A few yards from the University Belt, the narrow food alleys of Quiapo has been the favorite hang-out dining place of numerous students. Students choose to go there during lunch time without spending too much. The alleys of Quiapo, specifically Matapang Street, rose from a simple community to a must visit area, where all kinds of hole-in-the-wall dining places and street food can be found. Breakfast food is served all day, which is evident in several stalls that serve excellent silogs (fried rice and egg + viand). Kakanin, a native Filipino dessert, can be seen anywhere. These cheap starchy snacks like sapin-sapin, ube and bico are very popular especially to students who pass by Quiapo for merienda (mid-afternoon snack).

With the huge flock of mass attendees every day, especially on Friday (Quiapo Day), visitors can just conveniently eat street food anywhere. While the place is evidently rough and disordered, people still come to experience what it can offer. Evidently, there is no food that is just distinct to Quiapo. What one can see there can be seen anywhere else and common around the city of Manila. According to Montanari (2006), food is culture when it is produced and eaten. Food is produced because man does not only use what is found in nature but seeks also to create his own food, a food specific unto himself and particular to his place. It is Quiapo that makes the food distinct and the reason why people decide to go. Moreover, food is considered to be culture when eaten because an individual, while able to eat anything, does not in fact eat everything but rather chooses. The busy nature of the place, the presence of the church, the fortune tellers, and the sidewalk vendors who comprise

the crowd of the district contributes to the whole unique cultural experience in Quiapo. Indeed, the place has been considered as exotic even for Filipinos as the whole experience of spending time in this busy district of Manila captures interest. Quiapo represents a small world of culture which is why Filipinos and numerous foreigners come to visit the district.

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VI. QUIAPO: MARKET AND COMMERCE

BY GISELA ORINION

QUIAPO IS AN ARTFUL MASTERPIECE that weaves the past to the present. Its once, vibrant colors might have lost its luster; but its pieces were retouched and renovated by people, the modern artists, keeping its history intact for the future generation. Quiapo is a historical venue and a destination. It has its own culture. One of its distinctive, long-standing features is its chaotic yet remarkable market and commerce system.

Mura sa Quiapo. Quiapo is a popular destination for bargain prices. It is a haven of ambulant vendors selling fruits, vegetables, clothes, DVDs, cameras, herbal and medicinal plants, candles, handicrafts, religious paraphernalia, toys, clothes, household items, dresses and scarves for Muslims, etc. It also includes an array of services: street barbers and salons, electronic repairs, taga-dasal (someone who prays for your petitions), taga-laglag (abortion services), manghuhula (fortune tellers) etc. According to one handicraft vendor, lahat nandito na sa Quiapo (You name it, Quiapo has it). It is unimaginable how much goods and services this quaint district can offer to the public that it has attracted all kinds of classes, predominantly the low income and middle class shoppers. Hindi ka uuwing talunan sa Quiapo (You will not leave empty-handed), as uttered by a candle vendor.

The market and commerce system in Quiapo is dominantly covered by itinerant or ambulant vendors. The ambulant vendors are described as those who lack education and/or do not possess adequate vocational skills (Yhung Yu 1981). Several scholars wrote about the existence of ambulant vending/vendors in society. “Ambulant vendors are a common sight in major urban centers that have a large informal sector or underground economy. They are viewed by city administrators, law enforcers, and the economically affluent members of society in diverse ways. To the city administrators, they represent a group from which sales tax cannot be collected so that there is loss of income to the local government. To the police and traffic enforcers, they constitute obstruction on the streets and sidewalk. To the

affluent members of the society, they are a distortion of the ideal state of affairs in the city which could be a model of order and efficiency” (Guerrero, 1975). On the other hand, Azanza (1994) described ambulant vending as a way of life for those at the bottom income group who peddle their wares on the sidewalks and streets. These sidewalk businesses are the means of the urban people to survive through the income generating potentials of the street (Azanza 1994). Quiapo depicts the character of people, that is, to be street-smart to stay alive in a harsh social and economic environment (ibid).

The ambulant vendors, though scattered within the periphery and boundaries of Quiapo, are distributed structurally. The Quiapo ilalim (under Quezon bridge) is known to be the souvenir section. The Filipiniana souvenirs consist of handicrafts made of woodwork, shellcraft, and rattan craft (ibid) made by locals of different provinces. In some areas, the nature of the commercial goods and services depict the nearest commodities needed in the area. For example, the itinerants in Plaza Miranda, in front of Quiapo church, sell religious relics, amulets, prayer anecdotes, spiritual candles, medicinal and herbal plants etc. They also offer fortune telling services to people, who are believed to be after hearing metaphysical advices on their prayer intentions. Similarly, the itinerants near the Muslim mosque sell black covering dresses, scarves, halal food etc. to cater the Muslim community. Commercial activities of other sections in Quiapo duplicate each other. Hidalgo and Carriedo streets are open markets of electronic devices, repairs, fake DVDs, eyeglasses, cheap clothes and household items, cheap cooked and uncooked food (i.e. fish, vegetables, fruits), etc. Few local establishments are situated in the said areas and in Plaza Miranda such as: Chowking, local drugstores, coffee shops, and a Ministop. Moreover, the SM Carriedo Mall is one of the oldest, local commercial establishments in the area. It is believed to be the first SM in the Philippines, located in Carriedo area where the tycoon SM owner, Henry Sy, once resided. In contrast with all the SM malls in the country, the SM Carriedo branch maintains an old architectural “box” type-SM-department-store where goods are marketed equally with other brands. It does not have separate kiosks and spaces for signature brands and each floor level is labeled accordingly (i.e. 1st floor – children’s clothes; 2nd floor –

women's ware etc.). It can be observed that it has old employees which were perhaps retained by Henry Sy in respect of being the first employees of his monumental success in SM establishments.

According to Azanza (1994), "there is a toleration of vendors in Quiapo pointing out that the crowding was being allowed by the government merely because of the income earned by the government from such vendors." Yhung Yu (1981) claims that "the vending system in Quiapo is better than begging, pick-pocketing or prostitution." The ambulant vending behavior and the culture of open/flea market system in Quiapo is apparently an attractive income-generating business for the low income group since the 1970's. In an interview with a food vendor, he claims to have been selling in Quiapo since 1975. He was selling shoes and slippers in the past, but now sells cooked food instead. This type of vending pattern has been similarly adopted by almost all vendors in Quiapo. According to Yhung Yu (1981), "vendor pattern items are not only in accordance with the needs of times, but also in accordance with the needs of buyers." Similarly, a candle vendor said she was not into candle business before as she was selling other merchandises sold by her relatives. She was able to adapt the business through experience and decided to run through another vending business of her own. The subculture of vending defines that it "is an inherited occupation from ones ancestors" (ibid). Furthermore, there is a social organization built in ambulant vending where leaders are identified based on their ability to financially and morally support other members and their strong connections with police authorities. (Azanza 1994). There is also cooperation within the system wherein vendors help each other tap potential customers for each other's goods. The suki system (favored customer) is also established between the vendor and the vendee. It is also customary for the vendors to owe money for an unlimited period of time and can be paid through the kaltas system (deduction from its original costs) (Yhung Yu 1981).

In conclusion, the active and attractive market and commerce system in Quiapo from the past until today is due to the strengthened dynamism of the ambulant vending system and the ambulant vendors culturally adapting to the needs and commodities of the present time. Quiapo's street magic, therefore, is not just because

it was once historically relevant in the past (i.e. Plaza Miranda bombing) but it owes its name to the people, its biggest asset, who continued conducting various businesses (religious and the like) in order to cater to a wide variety of masses. Quiapo preserved its own market culture – the sense of community – which is distinctly Filipino.

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VII. POVERTY IN QUIAPO

BY APRILFLEUR S. GALIMA

A CRIPPLED MAN ON A WHEELCHAIR who meanders around the Quiapo church everyday unhesitatingly and instinctively described Quiapo as “lugar ng mahihirap”. This can mean either two things. One is Quiapo can be a place where the mahihirap converge and can mingle and interrelate with another or other people of other social classes. This is possibly by sharing one religion, trading in the market, or simply rubbing off each others' shoulder during busy days. The other one is, Quiapo is mostly populated with the urban poor.

What seems conspicuous is the face of poverty. It is easily noticeable that there are a lot of beggars with outstretched arms asking for alms and kids who are persistently following people for some change, food, or drinks. One can have a glimpse of Quiapo and will certainly remember the look, smell, and sound of poverty. After some time, one can start to feel the seemingly developed culture of poverty that envelops the place.

Another observation by a frequent Quiapo goer is the plethora of tiangges. These are not just any regular tiangge as one can imagine with ideas like ready-to-wear clothes, cheap gadgets, fruits and vegetables stalls, ukay-ukay, and makeshift stores. These are all in Quiapo. But when asked what a Quiapo tiangge is, many would answer that they thought of amulets, abortion pills, herbal medicines, fake DVDs, fortune-telling, and religious objects. Quiapo tiangge has its intrinsic tags that contribute to what Quiapo is.

Quiapo tiangges can be compared with retail-oriented, sachet-type, or budget pack-type of consumer market behavior. Filipinos prefer to buy in retail or in pieces instead of in bulk. Filipinos live in subsistence-level wages or just enough to get them through so they also buy just enough of what they need. In a study on sachet marketing conducted by Pornpitakpan, Singh, and Sy-Changco (2009), they found out from five multinational companies in the Philippines that the reason for sachet

marketing is to increase the number of trials on a specific product, thereby increasing sales.

By packaging certain products in sachets, these become affordable even to low income and subsistence markets. Two bank employees say that they'd rather buy their shampoos and toothpastes in sachets so they can control their consumption and save some money for food. Another buyer at a tiangge mentioned that she feel as good and fulfilled to have bought an imitation luxury item because nowadays, it is really hard to tell the fake from the genuine. Even vegetables are sold in retail, not per piece but as a package of sliced vegetables. Such is the case for the viand, chopsuey. Everything in Quiapo is on sale, on bargain. Even SM has a big banner that says they are on clearance sale.

This buying attitude is further affirmed by a family who lives in the streets of Quiapo when they said that they are contented and happy with their condition though it may be difficult at times. This is often what foreign observers describe as Filipinos' resilience. This might seem like a positive attribute at first but it may also be pointed out as a flaw. Often, in their optimism, Filipinos do not act accordingly. They hope that things will get better without actually doing something about it. They expect that these things will change over time.

“Poverty refers not only to low household income but also quality of life, quality of housing, the environment, lack of access to services, resources and skills, vulnerability, security, lack of voice, and powerlessness. Poverty determines how the poor are treated by others, the goods and services they can provide for themselves, and what the society will provide for them” (Asia Pacific Technical Paper on Emerging Infectious Diseases 2010, 120).

In study conducted by Bradshaw (2006) on anti-poverty approaches and programs in the United States, he examined how five theories of poverty can differently direct the focus and extent of these poverty alleviation efforts. Poverty Alleviation is one of the Philippine government's Millennium Development Goals in line with its adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration dated September 2000. Together with some 180 member-states, the Philippines agreed to meet a

quantifiable target by year 2015 to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. As a strategy, the current administration does not only subscribe to private-public sector partnership, but also encourages multi-sectoral efforts and contributions in addressing subsistence poverty. What is noticeable in the goals that the government laid out is the 100% target on Elementary Participation Rate by 2015. This is a good indication that the government is investing at improving the lives of the people by education and helping them to escape the cyclical culture of poverty by providing them an avenue to become skilled employees.

Asked how they think their future will be, some parents expressed the belief that that their kids will most likely be in Quiapo, selling in tiangges and will continue to live in makeshift shelters around the area as they also have inherited this from their parents. A head of a family said that he grew up and survived in Quiapo by selling things at night in the underpass so he believes that his grandchildren will be able to bear the same. His daughter is also now selling items here while her kids roam around the place and play with other kids. The children, who pose willingly when a camera is directed at them, expressed longing to go back to school. Two kids, who have been collecting cartons and bottles every night so they have some food to eat the following day, disclosed that they used to study in elementary but were forced to stop because of poverty. They said that they'd rather spend the money on food than on education. They said that they are 13 and 14 years old, respectively but their faces seem older than their age yet, their bodies seem weak. They don't even have slippers on as they aimlessly go around Quiapo looking for cartons and empty bottles, but they don't seem to complain at all. Everything seems to them as though they are destined to be in such as condition. When they talk about their life, they seem to have understood and accepted poverty as a way of life. They added that, "Eto lang ang kaya naming gawin para matulugan ang tatay namin kumita ng pera."

This section ends with an open-ended question: while there is a religion that teaches them to be faithful and hopeful, the environment oftentimes tempt them to do things that are not acceptable to God and are against our laws. In this regard, is poverty a matter of choice for these people or has poverty become the condition that defines them and what they do?

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VIII. CRIMINALITY IN QUIAPO

BY LEIH MABELLE VIDAL

THE SPIRIT OF QUIAPO is seen on the religious zeal of the people and their fervent expressions of faith, whereas the dark side of Quiapo is evident by becoming a reputed hotspot for crimes and illicit businesses not to mention many other problems associated with sanitation, prostitution, and general disorder. Being a densely populated district that is identified to have large concentrations of poverty, it immediately attracts all kinds of petty crimes, gang fights, robbery, and snatching. Police reports identify various cases of theft during the day and physical injury and drunken fights on night time. For the daily life in Quiapo, it is a normal occurrence and even expected.

Being one of the listed 21 crime-prone areas in the Metropolis, the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) in 2012 exerted additional effort to reduce the high crime rate by deploying more policemen in the vicinity of Quiapo. It was noted that crime incidences spike on Fridays when more devotees flock the Quiapo church, thus presenting more opportunity for criminal activities. To date, there is now a notable decrease in the crime rate in the busy Quiapo district as the police station in Plaza Miranda only receives one report in a day. *“Noon madami ‘yang mga krimen na ‘yan. Pero ngayon, wala na, konti na lang. Negative na ang Quiapo. Kaya yung mga sinasabi ng mga tao na delikado dito sa Quiapo, hindi totoo ‘yan”* says Station 3 commander Major Efren Pangan.

Before the development of Light Rail Transit connecting Monumento and Pasay that pass through the districts of Manila, small businesses and offices have settled there in prosperity. However, the construction of LRT transformed this middle class district into a darkened the width of Avenida Rizal due to the soot and dust of vehicles trapped under the railway, where unlit streets invited criminal activities and shanties of illegal settlers began appearing underneath the LRT. The LRT management foresaw that this would lead to closure of stores and offices but the

proposal to reroute jeepneys into the side streets was not approved by then President Marcos (Zialcita 2006).

Most of travel reviews of Quiapo comment on its relative safety, but always with a precautionary side note to travelers to remain vigilant when roaming the streets. A person should not be confident in the security and safety despite the presence of a police precinct in Plaza Miranda, for lawless elements abound Quiapo in varying thieving strategies and ages. Aside from the usual pick pocketing and cell phone snatching called the pitas gang, there are elements dubbed as the budol-budol gang in which the unwitting victim is tricked by the suspects to hand over their valuables voluntarily and even withdraw money from their ATM account. This kind of strategy is targeted to elderly and women who are vulnerable on emotional pleas that are used by the budol-budol as tactics. Visitors are also made wary of the sabit gang, in which a male suspect hangs on to a jeepney and then grabs bags or mobile phones from the nearest passenger. Alarmingly, there is an increasing incidence in which apprehended suspects are children, either acting out as accomplices and even as the prime suspects. One of the police officers expressed the dilemma for the law enforcement to contain such incidents since most of the culprits are minors. After taking sensitive steps to take these children to police custody, they will be turned over to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the authorized agency allowed to deal cases of juvenile delinquency. The minors cannot be handcuffed nor imprisoned while under police detention in accordance with face child rights violations.

A. Piracy

Aside from being a reputed as a crime hub locally, the Quiapo district has also drawn international attention as one of the worlds' "Notorious Markets" classified by the Office of United States Trade Representative (USTR) due to its capacity to generate pirated goods that are easily and cheaply available in the local market (Lee-Brago 2012). These identified markets are also centers of wholesale marketing of large quantities of illicit and counterfeit products that are aimed for export. According to USTR's annual review of Notorious Markets, "Quiapo is just one example of

several locations and neighborhoods, especially in Metro Manila known to deal in counterfeit and pirated goods, such as clothing, shoes, watches, and handbags.” The Notorious market list is comprised of markets based on the scale of global trademark counterfeiting activities and the impact of harm they cause to Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) holders.

In 2012, Quiapo was removed from the list due to the massive campaign of the government against the pirated industry. The USTR recognized the government agencies’ effort and their enforcement actions that helped reduced the number of illegal businesses that source out counterfeit products. Today, gone were the blatant display and selling of pirated optical discs in the shopping district. Even street peddling is now rare. The raids conducted for several years by the government’s Optical Media Board (OMB) seized up a number of replicating machines to produce copies of pirated music and movies. Tighter police monitoring and confiscation contributed to the decline in the overt sales of these pirated CDs and DVDs in public. Privately however, covert sale of these pirated goods are still operated in the less busy district of Palanca where peddlers are casually offering sample DVDs to passersby. After all, being dubbed as a haven of pirated wares is one of the district’s main attractions and if customers are only diligent enough where to look, a trip to Quiapo will not be a disappointment.

B. Prostitution

Aside from round the clock monitoring on this crime prone district, police authorities are also in constant watch on the presumed illegal activities of old movie houses that are notorious for showing pornographic films and for serving as brothels of male prostitutes. Once, authorities apprehended thirty seven persons inside a theater found in various forms of indecency (Canoy 2012). While it was famed for religious sites and feasts, Quiapo emerged after the Second World War as the country’s film capital. The theater houses such as Life Theater in Quezon Boulevard, Lider (now Ginto) in Evangelista Street, and Clover Theater in Palanca used to be the center of Manila’s entertainment life, but unfortunately, many of these theater houses have turned into dens of illegal sexual activities.

In Quiapo's golden days, American vaudeville, European opera and Tagalog zarzuela flourished here from 1940s to 1960s. Before Martial Law, it was a home to the music and theater industry that attracted the musically talented and networks of composers, band and orchestra players, music teachers, instrument makers, opera costume designers, and make-up artists were established (Nakpil Zialcita 2006). It was a close society of artists and a prospering era of performance arts in the country. However, the theater houses, which resembled the Philippine version of Hollywood, are now dilapidated buildings that are converted to shabby living quarters or operate as a legitimate business but suspiciously cater lewd films.

Irony lives in the different facets of Quiapo. Old timers can only remember Quiapo with sad nostalgia and see how much of its glory was brought down by dirt and decay. According to Nakpil Zialcita (2006), one of the reasons for the physical problems of Quiapo can be traced in the sense of "rootlessness" of its people. The original, wealthy and influential residents of Quiapo have since then moved to the suburbs in Quezon City and Makati beginning in the 1970s. They may have retained ancestral houses but somehow became indifferent in the developments of their former district. New settlers, on the other hand, have the same feeling of indifference for they do not have the attachment to Quiapo as their home but only as a temporary domicile, gradually losing its "neighborhood spirit" resulting to its current state of neglect (Nakpil Zialcita 2006).

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IX. QUIAPO: POLITICS AND THE PLAZA MIRANDA BOMBING

BY JOAN MACRISE CORRADO

PLAZA MIRANDA IS THE PUBLIC SQUARE bounded by Quezon Boulevard, R. Hidalgo Street and Evangelista Street in Quiapo, Manila. It is the plaza which fronts the Minor Basilica of the Black Nazarene (Quiapo Church), one of the main churches of the City of Manila, and is considered as the center of Quiapo as a whole. Inaugurated in its current form by Mayor Arsenio Lacson in 1961, it is named after José Sandino y Miranda, who served as the Philippines' Secretary of the Treasury between 1833 and 1854.

Before the imposition of Martial Law and the age of televised debates, Plaza Miranda was a popular venue for political debates. Located no more than a kilometer from Malacañang Palace, Plaza Miranda was the largest venue where rallyists could be physically close to the residence of the country's chief executive, whether in loyal support or oppositionist denunciation.

In the era of grand demonstrations and mass mobilizations, National Artist for Literature Nick Joaquin, in his *Almanac for Manileños*, described Plaza Miranda as “the crossroads of the nation, the forum of the land.” President Ramon Magsaysay, arguably the most popular of Philippine postwar chief executives, famously recognized the square as a gauge of public opinion when he asked a proponent of a policy or project: “Can we defend this at Plaza Miranda?” (Ubalde). Far removed from the closed, air-conditioned rooms of Congress or cushioned seats in public buildings, bringing an issue to Plaza Miranda was the ultimate act of transparency and accountability, where the people, any Juan or Juana de la Cruz, could question their government.

During the time that Plaza Miranda served as the country's foremost public square, three events stood out. The 1946 elections had then incumbent President Sergio Osmeña lose to his protégé-turned rival Senate President Manuel Roxas, who became the founder of the breakaway wing of the old Nacionalista Party that would

eventually become the Liberal Party (LP) as the latter mounted a nationwide campaign, going house-to-house, and giving stump speeches in town plazas.

Barely a year into his term, Roxas also delivered an important speech in Plaza Miranda—rallying the Liberal Party to support the Parity Agreement to the 1935 Constitution, which granted American citizens equal rights with Filipino nationals in the use of national natural resources. Just as the President finished speaking, a man lobbed a grenade on the stage, prompting General Mariano Castañeda to kick it away and cover President Roxas with his body. The grenade landed near the audience, killing two and wounding a dozen people.

Two decades later, after President Marcos won reelection in 1969, only to plunge in popularity as the peso was devalued and inflation and student demonstrations rocked the land. The sons of Presidents Osmeña and Roxas united under the LP, in opposition to President Ferdinand Marcos. Senators Sergio Osmeña Jr. and Gerardo Roxas both figured in the third, perhaps most infamous, incident in Plaza Miranda, which would indelibly link the Liberal Party of the Philippines to Plaza Miranda's identity as the forum of Philippine democracy.

On August 21, 1971 at the miting de avance of the Liberal Party in Plaza Miranda, the square became the scene of two simultaneous grenade attacks that nearly liquidated the party's leadership, just as Senator Roxas, Liberal Party President, was proclaiming his party's local candidates for the City of Manila.

Among those seriously injured were: Roxas, Osmeña, Senators Jovito Salonga, Genaro Magsaysay, Eva Estrada-Kalaw (Nacionalista guest candidate of the LP), and senatorial bets John Henry Osmeña and Ramon Mitra, Jr. (Time Magazine 1971).

No mastermind has been arrested or tried. The opposition initially pointed to President Ferdinand Marcos, whose Nacionalista Party was suffering a beating owing to relentless criticisms from his LP rivals and the widespread perception that he had cheated LP's presidential bet Sergio Osmeña in the 1969 elections.

Marcos pointed to the communist rebels, and used this as a basis for suspending the writ of habeas corpus and cracking down on critics. Former comrades of Jose Maria Sison, exiled founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CCP), broadly hinted he ordered the bombing in order to polarize an already tense situation and allow the radical opposition to dominate the political arena (Doronila 2007). Sison has denied the allegations, though subsequent hearings, when Salonga was already Senate President, tended to bolster this theory of a Sison-inspired attack.

Right after the bombings, which Ferdinand Marcos quickly blamed on the communist rebels, the then very unpopular president suspended the writ of habeas corpus, and in calibrated fashion unleashed the state security forces on civilians (Simafrania 2006). A still stunned electorate gnashed its teeth; many blamed Marcos who was a Nacionalista and suspected him of ordering the hit on the LP, but he consistently pinned the blame on the New People's Army.

Widely considered the most blatant assault on free speech and guaranteed democratic rights at the time, many quarters believed it to be masterminded by Marcos himself, which led to increased opposition to his administration. Three months later, the polls resulted in a Senate sweep by the Liberals, with only two Marcos allies making it into the winner's circle. The President's alter egos—Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile and Secretary of Labor Blas Ople—were among the losers.

The 1971 Plaza Miranda Bombing was, in a way, the square's last hurrah as the country's foremost stage for political discourse. The advent of mass media, which allowed candidates to reach a wide audience through television or the radio, political rallies have been reserved for proclamations or the traditional *miting de avance*. While no longer the grandest nor most prominent political forum, Plaza Miranda continues to remind Filipinos that Philippine democracy was not only restored in 1986, but is alive and free.

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